

Assessing Roadside Vegetation Management Alternatives
Project Management Meeting
October 5, 2004

October Action Items

Item #	Action	Due Date
1.	Dave will bring a synopsis from the Value Engineering recommendations report	Nov. 9
2.	Angela will bring the assessment from toxicology report	Nov. 9
3.	Schedule Island County Maintenance for a later meeting	Nov. 9
4.	Continue sending informational contact sources to Kristina	Nov. 9
5.	CALTRAN matrix will be scanned and sent out for comments at the next meeting	asap
6.	Next meeting – in Boardroom **new time: 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**	*New date* Nov. 9

Introductions – went around the table

Present:	Roy Scalf	Stan Suchan
	Bob Berger	Bruce Alber
	John Andrews	Keith Anderson
	Dave McCormick	Ray Willard
	Jay Davis	Pat Moylan
	Angela Storey	Marianne Edain
	Kristina Hill	Mark Wahl

Absent:	Heather Hansen	Josey Paul
	Karl Arne	Lee Dorigan
	Jack Taylor	

Value Engineering – Dave talked about the Value Engineering meeting that was held on Sept. 22-24. Gave a brief background of what the meeting was about and said that they came up with some preliminary recommendations. There were questions that required further research. One of the main questions was what would the cost impact be of the recommendations. The report from the VE group is due out in the next week or so. Dave will bring a synopsis of what was decided.

Ray said that WSDOT and WA Toxicology did meet, fulfilling our commitment that was made at the April 6 meeting. Angela will be writing Chris Christopher a letter summarizing the results of that meeting. Basically, what they came up with is that we can do a better job of explaining the context of the risk assessment and the purpose it serves. She will bring an assessment from that report to the next meeting.

October 23rd is the date of the planting party on Whidbey Island near Greenbank. Ray asked if the community group leaders could help out with publicizing the event through their networks.

There were no comments on last meeting's minutes.

Action items from September: Everything was completed except number 7 which was breaking out the Project Schedule from the Scope and putting it on the website. It's still being worked on and should be done in the following week.

No old business to discuss.

Snohomish County presentation: Roy Scalf from Snohomish County gave a slide show along with some background on how they've been managing with their no-spray program. He gave a brief history of when and why Snohomish County became a no-spray county. Since 1992, they have used purely mechanical methods (and manual) to control vegetation. They have about 1600 center lane miles and about 25% of that is urban. They have about 2400 shoulder miles. They do about 100 miles a year of shoulder pulling. They mow 3-4 times a year and brush cut every 4-5 years. Basically, what they do the most is respond to problem areas. Some of the problems they've been encountering are pavement failure, hydroplaning issues, ice on roadway, striping and ponding. There are also sight distance problems for driveways and intersections. The weeds grow right through the asphalt. Wheel ruts and drop offs is a big problem. The overgrowth has shortened the life of guardrails. Damage to telephone pedestals, guy wires and fire hydrants by mowers are another problem due to the fact that they are hidden under the vegetation overgrowth. Snohomish County roadside maintenance uses no herbicides. The Noxious Weed Control Board is who deals with the nuisance and noxious weeds. They do spot spraying. Roadside Vegetation maintenance costs have doubled since they stopped spraying 12 years ago and there's a lower level of service. About \$70,000 from their budget goes to the Noxious Weed Board. Shoulder pulling creates traffic delays and hazards. It also creates some water quality issues. They've discussed planting low growing vegetation, but it would be costly to implement. He mentioned in the past year, the Snohomish County Council has started asking questions about roadside spraying. Public perception has been mixed. People think they're not doing their jobs when they see the overgrowth. It's all aesthetics to them. People think they're not getting their tax dollars worth. And yet on the other hand, they get compliments for not spraying. Shoulders and guardrails are their two biggest problems. They've tried to work with the utilities when it comes to their pedestals and such, but haven't received much cooperation. They've looked at different prototypes of guardrail. There's a low maintenance one, but it would be costly to replace. Angela asked if they have collaborated with any of the other counties. Roy said a little bit with Thurston and Island counties. Pat asked if they've looked at rebuilding the roads with no-spray in mind. Discussion ensued regarding sub-

grade designs. Roy talked about his involvement with the Regional Road Maintenance ESA forum. This group consists of 30 entities (towns, cities and counties) and was formed between 1999 and 2003. They look at all maintenance activities that all the local agencies do. Ray said there's a link from the WSDOT's website. It's called the Regional Road Maintenance ESA Guidelines. Roy and Ray are working on an IVM to present to the forum. Angela asked where they are getting their information from for the IVM. Ray said they're using the info from the Roadside IVM as their baseline.

Literature Review – Decision Factors: Kristina asked everyone to continue sending her references. She also asked the working group to look through this list and let her know if there are any that you would like more detailed information on. They've looked at more than 40 publications so far. These cover the more obvious topics. They have to work harder now due to the diminishing returns in their inquiries.

Preliminary findings – For and against herbicides: New research studies are now showing that low toxicity herbicides are having an effect on the ecology on the likes of frogs, earthworms, fish and birds. And yet, on the other side, it has critical benefits. The health effects reports are mostly on the inactive ingredients. She talked about how you need to go through a public disclosure process in order to find out what the ingredients are. Plus, there's a lag time on the reports we're reading to what's out there now. Some of these were done a couple of years ago. There is also no literature on what the effects are on the more vulnerable people (immune disorders, liver problems, etc.). Most of these studies are focused on healthy people.

Drainage: there is hardly any literature on what we're experiencing here in WA (like ponding). We need to talk to other states that have similar weather conditions as ours. We have a problem that no one has written about.

Literature Review – Alternative Practices:

-Some of the reference findings from other states and countries: California is experimenting with road design and maintenance practices. They have what they call a Toolkit. This contains 15 alternatives that CA has studied. Some of them are design issues. We will need to follow up on them to see their results of these alternatives. Vermont and Oregon has tried using heating equipment. One of the problems with that is the bulkiness of the equipment. Iowa uses compost blankets. It's like a rollout mat. Finland and Germany has been looking at different kinds of paving.

Marianne asked about soil seed banks and if anyone has looked into that.

Kristina said that was one of the topics that came up at the SR 20 VE study.

-Kristina said California developed a matrix that shows different alternatives and their costs, challenges, benefits, etc. She asked if this is a format that the working group would like to use. Like a summary matrix. She felt this would be more beneficial than just having the literature review. She said she'll bring a copy of the matrix to show the group at the next meeting. Dave suggested we e-mail a copy to everyone to review before the next meeting. This matrix allows one to

evaluate and rank the issues and criteria. It also will show where the gaps are too. Ray said we're already heading towards that format. Kristina said on the CA matrix, there were boxes that just showed "maybes". Ray mentioned that this matrix was from 1997 and that there is now more up to date information on it. She said CA has a substantial research budget and would be interested in forming a partnership with WA regarding I-5.

Bob suggested checking out Lane County, Oregon. They have the longest running mechanical, no-spray program in the Western U.S. In reference to drainage issues, he asked if they have looked at what the railroads and air fields have done. Another topic he suggested is to check into weather patterns comparisons.

Interviewing – Started with WSDOT staff and other states: California, Maryland, Florida, Colorado, Minnesota, Iowa, Vermont, and Oregon. Some of the suggestions given: Utah, Massachusetts and Texas.

- Follow up with the actual researchers to see what they're really thinking
- Interview members of the group. Jacob Millard will be calling in the next month.
- The questions are pretty open-ended.
- Rich and Kristina will be involved with the demonstrative studies that WSDOT has come up with in terms of maintenance practices. Hopefully it will start this winter.

Next meeting has been changed to Tuesday, November 9 at 1:30 pm in the Boardroom.